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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 001004

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/MAG, NEA/IPA AND DRL/NESCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [KISL](#) [IS](#) [MO](#)  
SUBJECT: MUSTAPHA RAMID: MOROCCO NEEDS REAL REFORM; U.S.  
POLICY UNBALANCED

REF: CASABLANCA 0168

Classified By: Political Counselor Gregory Thome for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: In a December 10 meeting with PolOff, leading Islamist politician Mustapha Ramid stressed that he is pro-monarchy, but openly and frankly criticized the Government; suggested that Morocco was moving in the wrong direction; and called for a devolution of the king's powers. Engaging PolOff in a lively debate, he criticized U.S. policy in the Middle East, focusing on Israel and the Palestinians. Ramid's critique of Moroccan politics differs from the assessments of the majority of members of other Moroccan political parties and appears to promote genuine, democratic reform. Like many other harder-line Islamist politicians and activists, Ramid had minimized contact with the Embassy over the past several years; this meeting was one of several steps Mission Morocco is taking to expand its dialogue with those who have traditionally taken hostile stances toward U.S. policy. End summary.

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Morocco Backtracking on Reform  
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2. (C) PolOff met with the Islamist Party of Justice and Development's (PJD) parliamentary block chairman Mustapha Ramid on December 10. Ramid argued that the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM), which is widely perceived as the palace party, was created to put down the PJD. He cited as proof the PAM's actions during the communal council election in Oujda (Reftel), in which the PAM, Istiqlal and the Popular Movement effectively blocked PJD attempts to form a governing coalition. This sent a message that the PJD is ineffective and "only the PAM can resolve problems." The handling of the June elections and the creation of the PAM were a sign that Morocco was moving "backwards" in terms of democratization, he added. The Government simply did not want a party that is "independent" and expresses a different opinion.

3. (C) When asked about the king's reforms, Ramid stated that having the King as the source of reform was both "positive and mistaken." He made clear that he was pro-monarchy, but that he preferred the King not be involved in everyday issues. Instead, he proposed that the King should be removed from politics, allowing the Parliament to take over day-to-day operations. The King should direct the overall strategy and observe but should only interfere in times of crisis or when laws passed by Parliament were unconstitutional in Ramid's view.

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The U.S. Needs a More Balanced Foreign Policy  
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14. (C) Ramid emphasized that he had boycotted contacts with U.S. officials during the Bush Administration and that this was the first time he had met officially with a U.S. embassy official since then, aside from occasional social contacts with CG Casablanca PolOff. He stressed that he was reserving judgment on the current administration and considered himself neither an "enemy" nor a "friend" of the U.S. The previous administration had divided the world in two, which had strengthened those who see the U.S. as an enemy, like Usama Bin Laden. In a lengthy discourse against U.S. policy towards Israel and the Palestinians, he claimed that U.S. policy only supported Israel. When PolOff pointed out that the U.S. supports the Palestinian Authority (PA) and has strongly backed a two-state solution, he commented that the U.S. assists the PA "just enough to keep it alive" but not enough to truly improve the situation of the Palestinians. Asking why the U.S. favored a two-state solution, he speculated that there could be other possible solutions, such as one state for both Israelis and Palestinians. He called on the U.S. to act with more respect and justice in its policies and to be more balanced, especially in its Middle East policy.

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Comment  
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15. (C) Ramid is an influential PJD member as well as lawyer who has defended high-profile imprisoned Salafist sheikhs. This meeting represents part of a wider Mission Morocco initiative -- in keeping with the momentum and the new tone characterized in the President's Cairo speech -- to widen our

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contacts with Moroccan Islamists and others who have traditionally taken hostile stances toward U.S. policy. PolOff did not succeed in changing Ramid's negative views regarding U.S. policies the Middle East, but both agreed on keeping the door open to further discussions. Meanwhile, Ramid's frank critique of Moroccan politics differs from opinions expressed by the majority of the political parties here; he offered a realistic assessment in which he appeared to promote genuine, democratic reform.

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JACKSON